

Spring 2015

What Does it Matter What I Think? Challenging Teacher-Child Relationships, Perceptions, Power, and Prophecy

Andrea Emerson
Clemson University

Faiza M. Jamil
Clemson University

Dolores Stegeline
Clemson University

Follow this and additional works at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/hehd_awards

Recommended Citation

Emerson, Andrea; Jamil, Faiza M.; and Stegeline, Dolores, "What Does it Matter What I Think? Challenging Teacher-Child Relationships, Perceptions, Power, and Prophecy" (2015). *Health, Education and Human Development Awards*. 16.
https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/hehd_awards/16

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Research and Innovation Month at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in Health, Education and Human Development Awards by an authorized administrator of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact kokeefe@clemson.edu.

What does it matter what I think?

Challenging teacher-child relationships, perceptions, power, and prophecy

Andrea Emerson, Faiza M. Jamil, & Dolores Stegelin – Clemson University

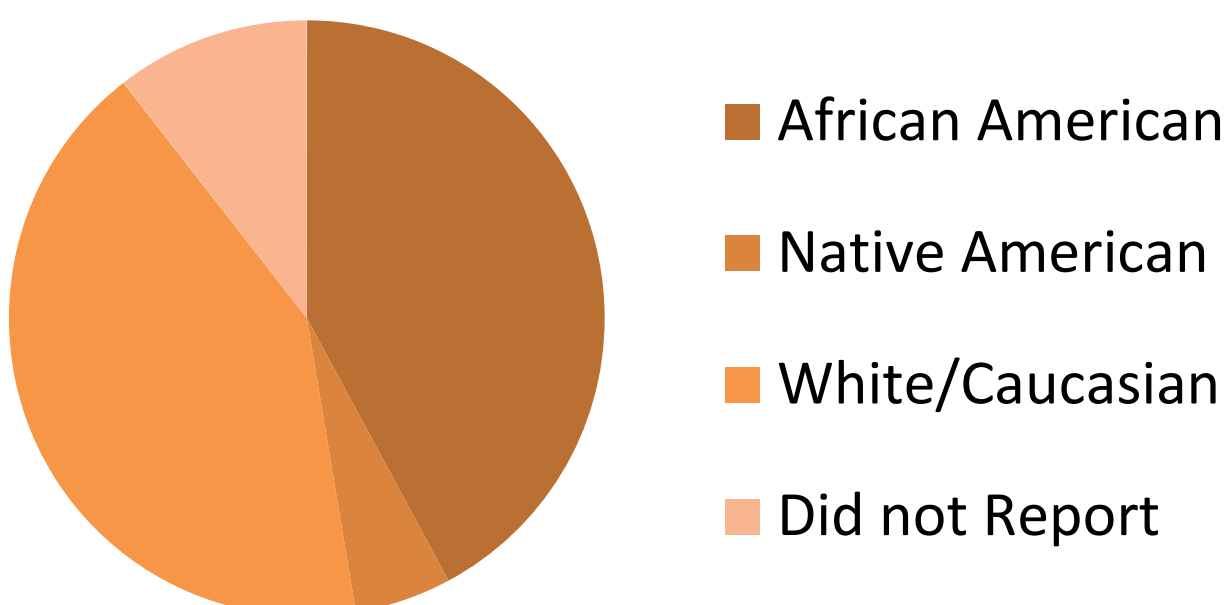
Introduction

- Teacher stress is problematic because of the deleterious effects it has on teacher's wellbeing (McEwen, 2008). Problem behaviors are one of the most common sources of teacher stress (Kyriacou, 2001).
- Problem behaviors embedded within challenging relationships conflict with teachers' basic need for relatedness with their students (Spilt, Koomen, Thijs, 2011).
- What teachers think matters. Research highlights the importance of
 - Mental representations**, which contain sets of beliefs and feelings regarding the teacher, the student, and the teacher-student relationship (Spilt, Koomen, Thijs, 2011) &
 - Appraisals**, which are emotions elicited by judgments of events and situations (Chang, 2009; Smith & Lazarus 1990)
- ...in understanding how teachers internalize challenging relationships in ways that effect their overall **wellbeing**.

Pilot Project

Project REWRITE

- Pilot tested a structured reflective writing intervention focused on improving teacher well-being and effectiveness
- Data were collected from semi-structured reflective writing notebook generated during the 3 month intervention
- **Participants** (N = 16 Head Start teachers in South Carolina)
 - Mean years **teaching pre-k children** = 10
 - 13 participants had a **two year degree or higher**

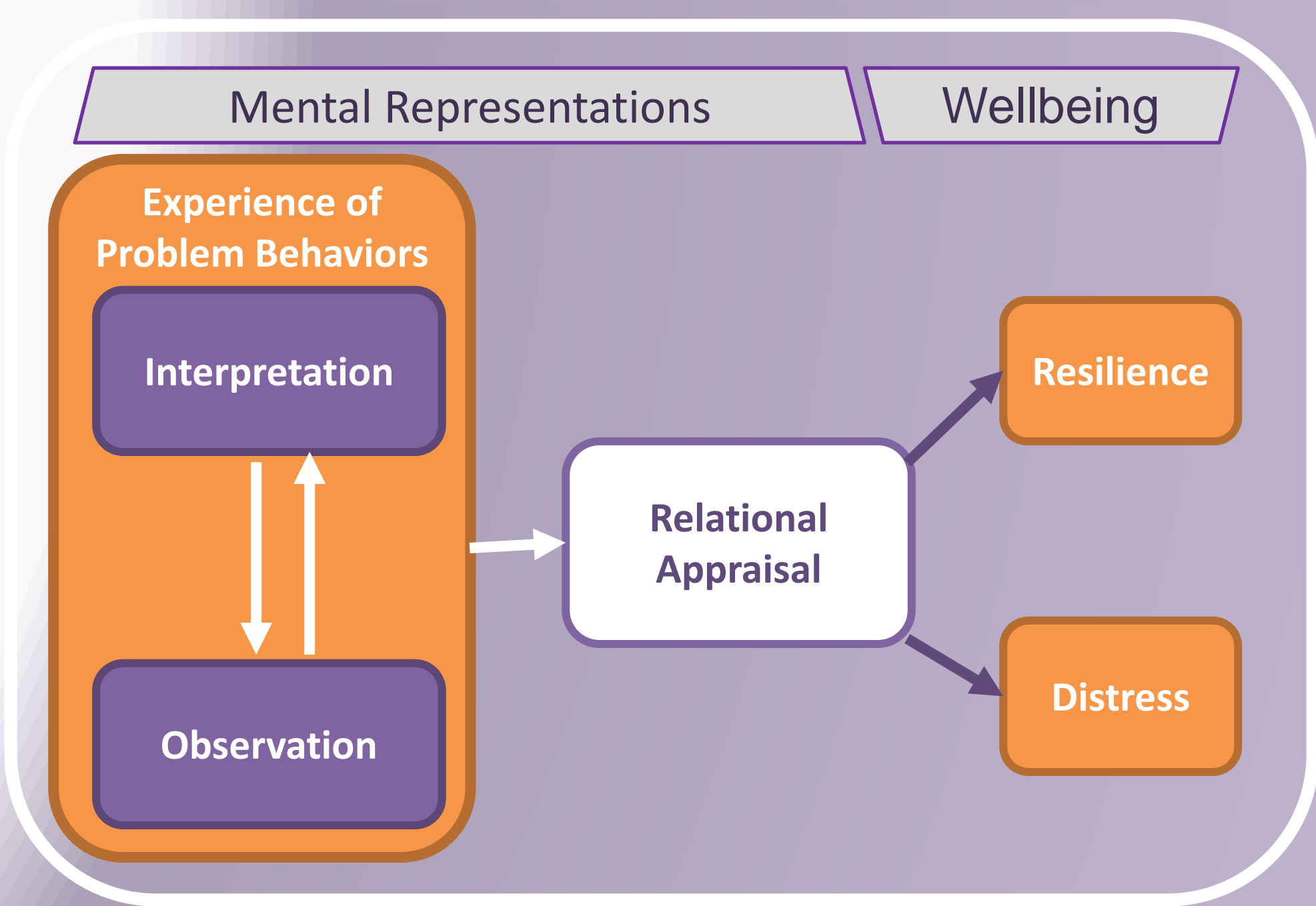


- An interpretive analysis was conducted using emergent codes

Methods

Research Questions

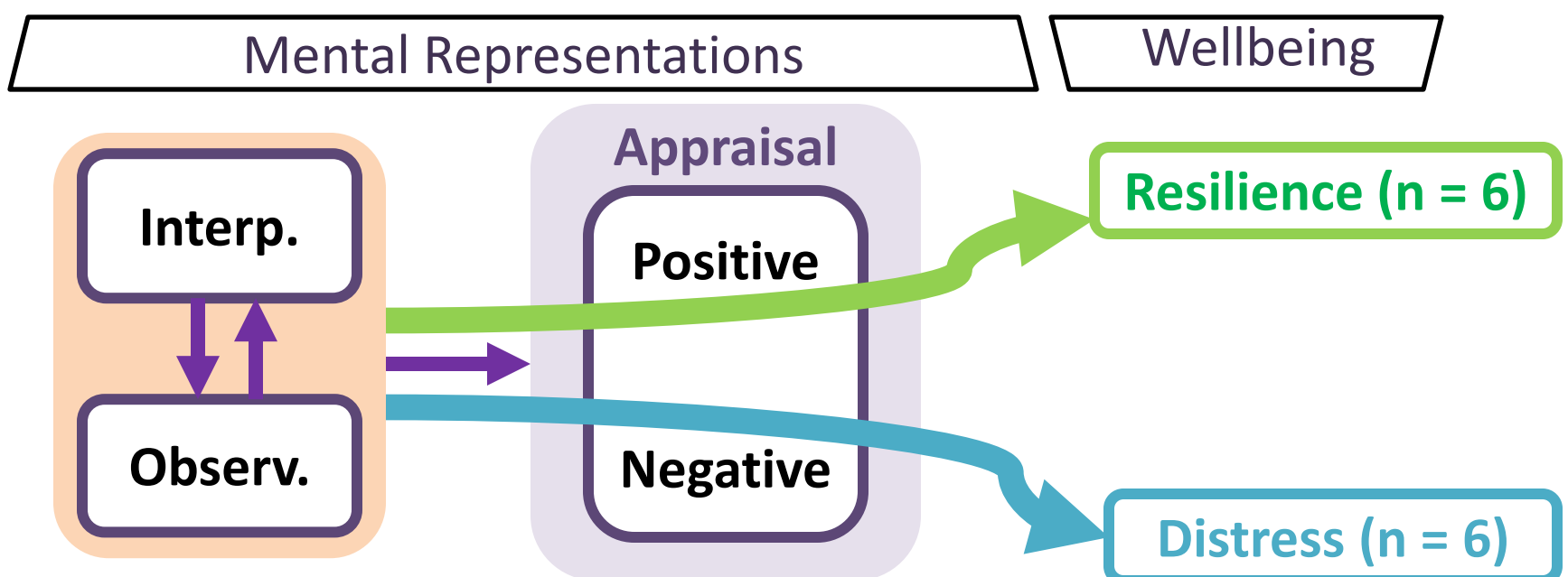
1. What are teachers' experience of relationships with challenging children in Head Start classrooms?
Emergent coding was used to unpack teachers observations and interpretations of children's problem behaviors
Descriptions of Relationships (Positive or Negative)
Description of the Challenge (a behavior or a student)
2. What are teachers' appraisals of children's problem behaviors?
Emergent coding was used to unpack teachers appraisal of the challenge
Reasons the relationship is so challenging
Rooted: outside teacher's control (Child or Family)
inside teacher's control (Teacher or Relationship)
3. How does an understanding of teachers' experiences of problem behaviors and challenging relationship appraisals illuminate teacher wellbeing among Head Start teachers?
Coded responses were used to generate paths according to RQ1 and RQ2
Combined consideration of: observation, interpretation, and appraisal were used to determine directions toward resilience or distress



R1	Observation: Descriptions of behaviors and descriptions of students were coded separately The behaviors included: staring at the teacher, not listening, whining, upsetting other student
R1	Interpretation: Descriptions students referred to personality characteristics The descriptions included: "She likes to be right" "He likes to disagree" impulsive, energetic, compulsive
R2	Appraisal: Reasons were rooted inside (positive) and outside (negative) of the teacher's control, rooted in: The child: "He does what I ask, but always has to act up or mess with someone else while doing it." The family: "The child does what he want to at home so he thinks it should be that way at school" The relationship or teacher: "I want him to participate and answer questions, but he does not at times so we struggle"
R2	Appraisal: Language used includes absolutes (negative) or occurrence adverbs (positive) Absolute: "Child wants to talk all the time" "is always upsetting the other students" Occurrence Adverbs: "normally" "sometimes" "at times" "not always"
R3	Resilience: Participants responses followed an approximate path of positive and negative descriptions of the relationship, challenge characterized as a behavior, rooted in teacher's control, might include occurrence adverbs Distress: Participants responses followed an approximate path of exclusively negative descriptions of relationships, challenge characterized as the child, rooted outside teacher's control, might include absolute language

Results

Resilience: "Many times throughout the day we struggle with each other....Sometimes (when I ask a question) he will answer, but many times he will not. I know how smart he is and I want him to participate and answer questions, but he does not at times so we struggle".



Distress: "The relationship I have with this child is like a tug of war. Sometimes it's like a power struggle. The child does what he wants to at home, so he thinks it should be that way at school also"

The interpretive analysis revealed

- ½ of the participants described the relationship with exclusively negative reports (observation) and described the challenge in terms of the child (observation)
- ½ of the participants described the reason as rooted outside of their control & 1/3 participants used absolute language (appraisal)

Discussion

- These results begin to unpack the components of challenging student-teacher relationships in Head Start classrooms, providing a first step toward, "better performance, a higher degree of professional satisfaction, and, consequently, a higher level of teacher retention" (Montgomery & Rupp, 2005, p 483).
- Next steps include comparing the resilience and distress participant groups by utilizing the quantitative data from Project REWRITE to consider outcomes including (wellbeing, burnout, self-efficacy, and teacher-student interactions).

Acknowledgements

The research reported here was supported by Clemson University, through Project REWRITE, URG grant number 1480571. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of Clemson University.